

# The Detroit News

## Letter: Celebrate education's unsung heroes

November 17, 2016 | Cindy Schumacher, *detroitnews.com*



They're the most important people in education you've probably never heard of, yet charter school board members serve roles which largely go unsung with the general public.

Juliet Squire's Oct. 10 column "What do we know about charter boards?" pointed this out despite the fact that charter school boards are critical to our local communities and the greater educational landscape. As a charter school authorizer, Central Michigan University has long recognized and celebrated our boards for helping to shoulder the monumental responsibility of ensuring Michigan families are provided the choice of a high-quality education.

Squire referenced her and her co-author's recent study for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute on charter board members in Washington, D.C. They found that the board members of high-quality charter schools differ in some very significant ways from their lower-performing counterparts. Namely, they tend to be individuals who demonstrate both the interest and capacity to be engaged and knowledgeable about their schools, and the willingness to participate in training and support that is essential to becoming effective board members.

This responsibility to ensure board member quality begins with the authorizer. This is why every board member at a CMU-authorized school must undergo a selection and appointment process that includes a written application, criminal records check and other due diligence, and a personal interview before the

University's Board of Trustees reviews and confirms the appointment. They must also swear the constitutional oath of office to begin their service.

As the study also shows, it is equally the support and training opportunities provided to board members that help guarantee each school's success towards fulfilling its mission. This is why we invest so heavily in professional development for our board members. It seems like a simple premise, but having better trained and better prepared board members pays lasting dividends within the schools they lead.

Being a board member requires a willingness to not only make decisions that are monumental in nature, but also to be held accountable for those decisions by all levels of government, the authorizer who grants the charter contract, and the students and their families with whom they are tasked with serving.

Charter school board members should be recognized for the dedication and leadership they provide to so many schools across Michigan. When they succeed in their work, they are truly transforming public education and providing quality opportunities for our children; something that is worthy of our gratitude.

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